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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington

In reply refer to
S/S-PR 641.11241/12-1449

April 13, 1950

My dear Admiral Hillenkoetter:

Your letter of December 14, 1949 concerning customs duties and purchase taxes imposed on effects imported by the personnel of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service stationed near London has only recently come to this office for consideration. It is regretted that an earlier reply was not made to your letter.

Similar problems have arisen throughout the world, and though the Department has given sympathetic study to each case, it is the considered opinion of the Department that representatives of this Government who are not assigned or appointed to perform diplomatic functions should not be attached to United States diplomatic missions abroad for the purpose of receiving the immunities and privileges ordinarily granted only to diplomatic staffs.

The United States Tariff Law provides, in paragraphs 1632 and 1798, for the admission free of duty of personal and household effects of any alien entering the United States. Although these provisions are restrictive in scope, they do establish a basis on which foreign governments may be requested to extend reciprocal privileges to cover the necessary and usual effects imported in connection with the arrival in a foreign country of officers and employees who do not fall within the diplomatic group. With this in mind, a copy of your letter is being sent to the American Embassy at London with the request that the matter be taken up with the appropriate British authorities with a view to finding a solution to the problem.

The Department is aware, of course, that employees of this Government are more seriously affected by the absence of importation

importation

Rear Admiral R. H. Hillenkoetter, U.S.N.,
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privileges after original arrival in most foreign countries than employees of foreign government on duty in the United States who may supply their personal and family needs from the open markets. However, in every similar situation the Department has taken the position outlined in this letter, and, accordingly, since it would be unable to reciprocate, cannot urge foreign governments to extend privileges, ordinarily extended to diplomatic officers and employees only, to United States officers and employees who do not fall within that category.

Sincerely yours,

(S) Stanley Woodward

Stanley Woodward
Chief of Protocol